

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A thermal treatment apparatus comprising:
  - a furnace of a refractory;
  - a stage capable of carrying synthetic silica glass and moving between a first stage position for ~~letting~~ holding the synthetic silica glass ~~into~~ inside the furnace and a second stage position for ~~letting~~ holding the synthetic silica glass ~~out~~ outside of the furnace;
  - a heat generator for heating the synthetic silica glass, the heat generator being provided on a surface of the furnace so as to surround the synthetic silica glass in the first position; and
  - a driving section connected to the stage, for moving the stage between the first stage position and the second stage position.
2. (Original) A thermal treatment apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a rotational driving section for rotating the stage.